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ABSTRACT

A view of the status of Southeast Asian language programs in American schools leads the author to comment on five interrelated issues. They include: (1) the importance of Southeast Asian language and culture teaching and learning, (2) integrating culture in Southeast Asian language classes, (3) teaching techniques, (4) staffing, and (5) cooperation between universities. A bibliography is included. (RL)

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CULTURE IN SOUTHEAST ASIAN LANGUAGE CLASSES

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1. Importance of Southeast Asian language and culture teaching and learning
2. Integrating culture in Southeast Asian language classes
3. Techniques
4. Staffing
5. Cooperation between Universities

1.

When in many American university campuses the students want to see all foreign language requirements abolished, any language teacher cannot help but wonder whether he really has a lot to offer to the education of younger generations as he used to believe.[1] When the cushion of the National Defense Education Act of 1958 has almost dissipated into nothingness, the Southeast Asian language teacher is left vulnerably exposed to extinction due to the Darwinian law of natural slection. In this critical state, the language teacher in general and the Southeast Asian language teacher in particular have to think about their profession in order to be able to adapt themselves to the new environment for survival. The more the language teacher thinks about his professional contributions, the more he is convinced that the teaching and learning of foreign languages is of great importance both in a country which needs an international language or lingua franca for international communication[2] and mass communication as is the case with many multilingual countries,[3] and in one where an international language like English or Spanish is already spoken by the majority of the people.[4] Since one of the major roles of language is the expansion of culture,[5] the learning of a foreign language is the key to the intellectual, artistic, and literary riches of another nation, its value in general education is therefore undeniable.[6] Furthermore, as far as the teaching of Southeast Asian languages is concerned, in view of the fact that a Western country has vital interest in keeping abrest of international culture, and in having good communication with the Southeast Asian part of the world, the knowledge of one or more Southeast Asian languages by

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a large segment of its population is an important factor in the educational, social, diplomatic, and even economic development of that nation. In fact, there are at least two communication needs to be recognized here: Being unable to practice isolationism in the present world, a Western nation has urgent need for social, economic, and psychological understanding of the Eastern hemisphere of which Southeast Asia constitutes an important part. Further, it ought to establish effective channels of communication with other nations. Perhaps one can argue that, in international diplomacy, it is the weaker and poorer nation that has to learn the language of the stronger,[7] but experience tells us over and over again that it is not the ideal case. International communication just like interpersonal relations should be a give-and-take situation.

Because second language learning is an important factor in national education, and because a knowledge of a Southeast Asian culture is the key to better understanding and appreciation of that part of the world, it is hoped that the teaching of Southeast Asian languages becomes more and more widespread in Western countries,[8] and that the teaching of culture and cross-cultural assimilation is made an integral part of the curriculum. In order to make the Southeast Asian language teaching expansion possible, means have to be found to enable universities and colleges to offer a maximal number of SEA language programs at minimal cost, and consequently to enable the students to choose the SEA language or languages they prefer to learn or that is or are most useful to their special fields of interest. A proposal to solve the problem of establishing low-enrollment Asian languages programs can be found in another paper of mine entitled "Problems of Establishing Low-Enrollement Asian Language Programs" presented at the Conference on Asian Studies on the Pacific Coast, Oaxtepec, 1970, and later published in the Hawaii Language Teacher, January 1971. It is then the purpose of this present paper to point out and try to solve the problems of integrating culture in Southeast Asian language classes while examining the classroom techniques, the staffing, and the necessity for cooperation between universities.

2

Since a practical statement of what culture is in terms of classroom instruction will have to be given here, a degree of clarification may result from making some remarks about the relationship between language and culture, what culture means to humanists and scientists, and ways of looking at culture.

For scholars such as Sapir, Whorf, and Pike language is not a self-contained system; the behavior aspects are closely related to linguistic aspects; and language is viewed as being only one part of a larger totality of structured human behavior. On the one hand, language is inextricably mixed with other aspects of this behavior totality, and on the other hand, language behavior constitutes a significant part of this total behavior. Since language is considered as being in relation to other behavior aspects of the totality of structured human behavior, and since, as what immediately follows here indicates, the totality of structured human behavior is what culture is, language is then closely related to culture.

The definition of the term *culture* encounters some difficulty, in fact the term has a number of meanings that are not only sharply different but at times contradictory. As Nelson Brooks says: "We find it (the term culture) used in reference to raising blueberries, improving one's speech, listening to string quartets, and training children in infancy. We find it used to refer to a nation's total character, thought, and action. We call cultural that which stands out as the *best* that people do; we also call cultural *everything* they do, and everything they think and believe as well. Clearly, no single word can mean all these things at once."[9] In a definition of culture, Brooks in the same article has a list of meanings for the word, and assigns a number to each one as follows:

Culture$_1$ - biological growth
Culture$_2$ - personal refinement
Culture$_3$ - literature and the fine arts
Culture$_4$ - patterns of living
Culture$_5$ - the sum total of a way of life

In another article,[10] Nelson Brooks indicates that there are two different ultimate sources of the patterns of thought and action, of belief and behavior

according to which we lead our daily lives (i.e. culture$_4$). One of these sources, he says, is called Olympian. Olympian culture is referred to when we think of the contents of museums, exhibits of pictures, displays of statues, orchestras, theatrical reproductions, ballet dancing, or lectures on literature and the arts. The other source is called Hearthstone culture and is referred to when we talk about the native language of a people, the do's and don't's of personal behavior, the pecking order, the giving way to others, or the way to work, save, play, to win approval, or to maintain one's emotional balance.

Seeing above that language is closely related to culture,[11] and that culture includes many various aspects, the language teacher will have to find a way to integrate culture to language classes in order to help the learner achieve an understanding as complete as possible of the people he is learning the language of. He has to lead the learner to have a substantial knowledge of specific facts mentioned above concerning the culture, some understanding of the main patterns of thought, beliefs, and traditions, and some appreciation of the values that account for the way the people of that culture live and behave.[12] He must be able to point out to the latter the significance of the accomplishments of the people as well as describe the way the people eat, drink, exercise; how they cater to their personal (artistic, educational, or social) or religious needs.

In order to have sufficient material to provide himself with many cultural units to present in class, the language teacher can just organize his personal experience according to Edward T. Hall's *Map of Culture*.[13] The map of culture is an analysis of culture in the form of a diagram. The ten "primary message systems", as Hall calls the salient points of culture, are listed both vertically and horizontally, yielding a checkerboard grid of 100 squares, each symbolizing the interrelationship of one "primary message system" to all of the others. The list is as follows: (1) Interaction; (2) Association, (3) Subsistence; (4) Bisexuality, (5) Temporality; (6(Territoriality; (7) Learning; (8) Play; (9) Defense; (10) Exploitation. If this approach is thought of as not going far enough toward supplying him with the relevance which will be adequate enough for the classroom teaching of culture, the teacher can also check the profile of a culture through Nelson Brook's list[14] composed also of ten dimensions: (1) Symbolism, (2) Value; (3) Authority; (4) Order; (5) Ceremony; (6) Love;

(7) Honor; (8) Humor; (9) Beauty; (10) Spirit. Once he has had the materials, he will also have to think of his classroom techniques of presenting them to his students, a matter I shall take up in the next paragraph.

3

With the aims of teaching culture right along with language (pronunciation, grammar, limited vocabulary and some reading at the beginning, and reading and discussions in the target language later on), the classroom techniques feature experience-based, intensive instruction and research, with emphasis on the applied uses of the foreign language to be learned in true-to-life situations.

The advocated culture program can be subdivided into three phases: the beginning phase including the regular two first levels of language as is the case in Hawaii, the intermediate phase equated with the third level of language, and the advanced phase parallel to the fourth level of language.

In the beginning phase, the unit of culture study as well as language learning is the dialogue. It must be contextually based and experientially relevant.[15] The experiential techniques are to let the student act out the dialogue and go through the drills (substitutional, expansional, transformational, or question-answer types), not automatically but with his interest vested in the vocabulary relevant to real life.[16] Since the use of language calls for the contribution of the whole personality,[17] the class should be the "scene of various activities."[18] It should be "a society in miniature"[19] where each student is a living, experiencing, and active person, and not just a receptor of the content of the course.[20] The experiential techniques enable us to give a cultural dimension[21] to every language class by asking our students questions such as: Where are we? Who is present? What is the interrelationship between one person and another? Upon what is attention focused? How is language used? When those present address each other, are the forms used intimate or polite? Are proper namese spoken? What formulas of politeness appear, what requests, what directives? Whate types of kinesics? [22]

The next important concern in the beginning phase is to see how language itself is studied and learned in the target culture, and to appropriately adapt such procedures to the American classrooms. This concern has to do with the correctness of pronunciation, the rightness of grammatical structures, orthography, and semantic precisions. While dealing with these

linguistic aspects, we may also turn to proverbs, sayings and idiomatic expressions[23] that are known to every native speaker and representative of the way the people think, behave, or look at cosmological phenomena. Naturally, the classroom in this beginning phase can be also decorated with posters, pictures, maps, signs, and relia of many kinds that involves not only participation but also questions, criticisms, evaluation, and comparison with the native culture of the student.

In the intermediate phase, the central format of the lesson is a reading text[24] presenting a cultural topic which may be a folk tale representative of the cosmological, ethical, or religious concepts of the people, or a true-to-nature geographic setting, historical events and personalities, the arts and crafts. Dialogues and related conversations are to reinforce the knowledge of new vocabulary items, idiomatic expressions and sentence patterns as well as to compare the new culture traits with one's own.

Whereas the intermediate phase calls for texts that are carefully graded in terms of vocabulary and grammatical structures, the advanced phase allows relatively free selections of excerpts from writings of well-known native authors and men of letters.[25] The excerpts, being written by the people and for a native audience, enable the student to better understand the main patterns of thought, beliefs, traditions, and values that account for the way the people life and behave. The texts consequently give the student greater empathy with the people and deeper appreciation of their culture while presenting the diverse aspects of the national heritage ranging from the physical milieu and agriculture to the religious and moral universe, the people, the language and the literature, the theater and the arts, the traditional festivals, as well as folklore and folk songs. The reading of the texts is to be followed by impromtu discussions about the same cultural aspects or about similar aspects in the culture of the students conducted in the target language, or by preprepared oral presentations of similar topics by the students.
4

The insertion of culture to language classes at the beginning phase will be more authentically done if native speakers of the target languages are employed as language instructors or drillers.[26] A coordinator, who must be trained and experienced in the field of intensive aural-oral

methodology, including program design, staff training, and overall supervision,[27] will be in charge of the course. He will participate in the inductive aspect of the course, and direct the congnitive-informational aspect of the cource by asking the questions on culture mentioned above for example. He will also guide the students' reading in the culture as well as direct the preparation of cultural video-tapes and case studies for cross-cultural training purposes.

5

With a comprehensive program of language and culture program including the variety in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, culture, and literature of a Southeast Asian language, the Western student has a task that is not easy, but which is at the same time rewarding, because it opens the door to one of the richest heritages of thought, and experience of the human race. The important work of integrating culture in Southeast Asian classes in the Western world calls for intensive research in anthropology, and cross-cultural studies as well as pedagogy. Close international cooperation is needed to enable the SEA language teaching and research centers to exchange ideas, specialists and study teams with similar organizations throughout the world. In this connection, may I personally congratulate all the colleagues who have made this session on "Integrating Culture in Programs for Less Commonly Taught Asian Languages" possible, and may I wish the best of luck to the newly organized American Council of Teachers of Uncommonly-taught Asian Languages.

FOOTNOTES

[1]At the University of Hawaii Hilo Campus, a fresh approach to higher education in the State of Hawaii has recently been adopted. Relevant to this paper are, on the one hand, the elimination of a foreign language requirement, and, on the other, the creation of a three-tract foreign language program. The program gives the student the option of the conventional two-year course, a one-year conventional-cultural approach, or, for those who want to use it in their careers, an accelerated Japanese program which will yield intermediate proficiency in one year or less. The accelerate course uses methods developed by the old Peace Corps Training Center and headed by Dale P. Crowley at one point.

[2]For further information about language situations in multilingual countries, see Joshua A. Fishman (ed.) *Language Problems of Developing Nations*. New York: Wiley, 1968.

[3]For further detail on the role of foreign language teaching and learning in Asia and Africa, see Franc A, Rice (ed.) *Study of the Role of Second Languages in Asia, Africa, and Latin America*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1962.

[4]For information about the role of foreign language learning in national education, see *The Teaching of Modern Languages, Report on the UNESCO Regional Seminar Held in Sydney, Australia, January-February, 1957*. Australian National Advisory Committee for UNESCO.

[5]For the relationship between language and culture, see, for example, Dell Hymes (ed.) *Language in Culture and Society*. New York: Harper, 1964. The concept of language as closely related to culture was systematized by Benjamen Lee Worf, *Language, Thought, and Reality*, edited by John B. Carroll, Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1956, and by Edward Sapir, *Selected Writings of Edward Sapir in Language, Culture, and Personality*, edited by D. G. Mandelbaum, Berkeley and Los Angeles: U.C. Press, 1949. It was later consolidated by Kenneth L. Pike, *Language in Relation to a Unified Theory of the Structure of Human Behavior*, Glendale: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1954, 1955, and 1960.

[6]See, for example, *Second Language Learning as a Factor in the National Development in Asia, Africa, and Latin America; Summary Statement and Recommendations of an International Meeting of Specialists Held in London, December, 1960*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1961.

[7]The National Development Education Act of 1958 merits to be praised for its recognition of the importance of language teaching and learning in the United States.

[8]Since World War II, the expansion of foreign language teaching in the Western hemisphere is being being noted.

[9]Nelson Brooks, "Teaching Culture in the Foreign Language Classroom", *Foreign Language Annals*, I,5 (March 1968):204-17, page 210 quoted.

[10]Nelson Brooks, "Culture - A New Fronteer", *Foreign Language Annals*, 5,1 (October 1971):54-61.

[11]In 1871, Sir Edward Taylor, in his *Primitive Cultures*, defined culture as: "...the complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, arts, morals, law, customs, and any other capacities and habits acquired by man as a member of society." Reprinted in *The Origins of Culture*. New York: Harper Torch Book, 1958.

[12]For a cross-cultural training technique, see, for example, James F. Downs, *Fables, Fancies and Failures in Cross-Cultural Training. Trends Volume 1, No. 2.* Hilo: Peace Corps Training Program, 1968.

[13]Edward T. Hall, *The Silent Language*. New York: Doubleday, 1959.

[14]See note 9 above.

[15]Fr. Closset says: "A pupil tends to remember only what he actually experienced and what is in harmony with his personality" ('Adolescents and Modern Languages', in *The Teaching of Modern Languages* (Proceedings of UNESCO Seminar in Ceylon, 1953), Amsterdam: Drukkerjj, 1955.

[16]For an example, see Dwight Gradin and Nguyen Dang Liem, *Vietnamese One-Thought Comprehension Drills*, Honolulu: Asia Training Center, University of Hawaii, 1969. Mimeographed, being expanded to be published as a beginning text in Vietnamese.

[17]W. A. Bennett says: "The use of language calls for the contribution of the whole personality", *Aspects of Language and Language Teaching*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1968, p.71.

[18]Fr. Closset, "Adolescents and Modern Languages", see note 15.

[19]R. Valnir C. Chagas, *Didatica Especial de Lingua Modernas*. Sao Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1957, p.337.

[20]Earl W. Stevick,in "B + VSP, or After BC + PS + AP, What", *Language Sciences*, 6, August 1969, pp.9-10 quotes: "the teaching of a language should be considered more as imparting a skill than as the provision of information..." from the *Report Seminar on the Methodology of Teaching*, p.50.

[21]For more information on the experiencial techniques, see *Cross-Cultural Training, A Draft Book*. Estes Park, Colorado: Center for Research and Education, May 1969.

[22]Jerald R. Green, "A Focus Report: Kinesics in the Foreign-Language Classroom", *Foreign Language Annals*, 5,1 (October 1971):62-68.

[23]For the use of proverbs in pronunciation, see, for example, Nguyen Dang Liem, *Vietnamese Pronunciation*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1970. For examples of idiomatic expressions, see Nguyen Dang Liem, *Four-Syllable Idiomatic Expressions in Vietnamese*. Honolulu: East-West Center, 1969.

[24]For examples, see Nguyen Dang Liem, *Intermediate Vietnamese, Volume I* and *Intermediate Vietnamese, Volume II*. South Orange, N.J.: Seton Hall University Press, 1971.

[25]For example, see Nguyen Dang Liem, *Advanced Vietnamese, A Culture Reader*. South Orange, N.J.: Seton Hall University Press, forthcoming.

[26]The drill masters should normally have to be native speakers of the language being taught, because the students have to imitate them in all aspects of language and culture. Furthermore, the drill masters should be able to write supplementary exercises under the linguistically oriented supervision of the professional coordinator.

[27]Even when basic courses are written in the most enlightened way, the frustration remains that "the language teacher is not likely to find a textbook adjusted to his needs", W. A. Bennet, *Aspects of Language and Language Teaching*, p.108. Therefore, the coordinator should be able to direct the preparation of supplementary materials.

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